

# Council Papers

a Cooperative Community Council publication

Cycle 6 No 1, July, 1995

## News

Minutes of the  
5th annual meeting  
of the CCC

## Features

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ascendancy*  
Reviewing cooperatives law

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## 100 years of international cooperation

As the International Cooperative Alliance enters its second century, its membership has reached over 750 million at grassroots level and the basic principles which it promotes have been applied to all aspects of economic and social life on every continent.

The International Cooperative Alliance encourages its members to inform Governments about the work and potential of cooperatives and to develop information programmes which make use of new communications technology, thereby targeting young people who will be opinion leaders and decision makers in the next 100 years of international cooperation.

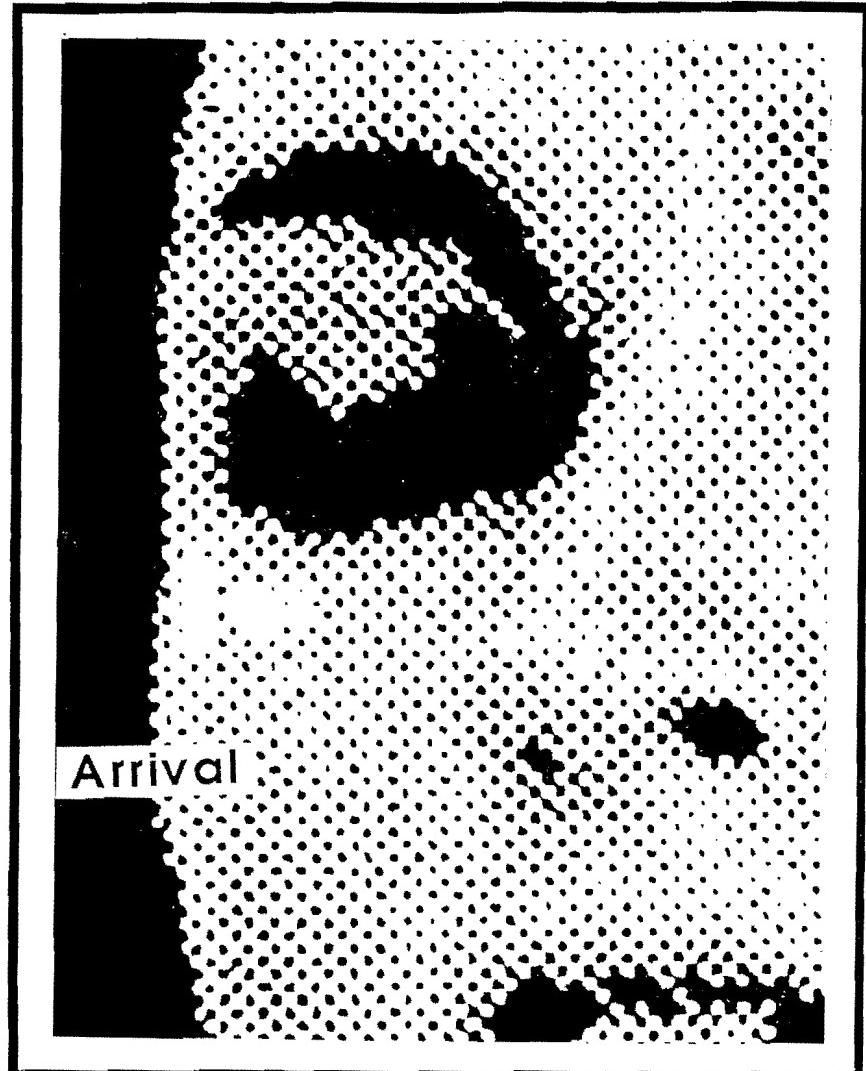
## UN endorses cooperatives

The United Nations General Assembly has declared the first Saturday of July as the United Nations International Day of Cooperatives, coinciding with and reinforcing the ICA's own International Cooperative Day, which was first celebrated in 1923.

The United nations thus recognises the contribution of cooperatives to economic and social development as an indispensable factor in promoting the fullest possible participation in the development process of all population groups.

In his report to the General Assembly, in July 1994, the UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, stated that "cooperative enterprises provide the organisational means whereby a significant proportion of humanity is able to take into its own hands the tasks of creating productive employment, overcoming poverty and achieving social integration".

The UN encourages Governments to consider fully the potential of cooperatives for contributing to the solution of economic, social and environmental problems in formulating national development strategies for sustainable development.



## ICA Board approves new principles

The "Cooperative Principles", based on the traditions of a variety of 19th century pioneers, and last revised by the ICA in 1966, are to be submitted for review at the ICA's Centennial Congress and general Assembly, in Manchester in September. The new proposal, as approved by the ICA in April, consists of seven principles: voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; member economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training and information; cooperation among cooperatives; and concern for community.

The new version of the Cooperative principles is to be contained within a "Statement on the Cooperative Identity", which also identifies the basic cooperative values as self-help, democracy, equality, and solidarity. Cooperators, it says, believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

While emphasising the self-help aspect of cooperatives, the new principles also stress the wider role which cooperatives play in the community and extend the principle of education to reflect the importance of information in spreading the cooperative message more widely.

# The 5th CCC annual meeting

## June 3rd, 1995

at the Halladay's Place, Lot 2, Sharrock Rd, Wamuran

Attendance: Anthony Esposito, Allan Halladay, Christine Zangari, Paul Monsour, Merv Partridge, Peter Pamment, Ann Jupp

Apologies: Jill Jordan, Kerry Petherbridge, Rosanne Brown

Facilitator: Paul Monsour

Minutetaker: Christine Zangari

### Agenda

1. Acceptance of minutes of the 4th CCC annual meeting

2. Business arising including -

- i. Secretariat Statement
- ii. Strategic issues in the regional community Directions for the next year
- iii. Motion on proposed changes to the rules
- iv. 95/96 active membership criteria
- v. Appointment of a co-secretary
- vi. CCC & CESG cooperative agreement
- vii. Review of CCC Cooperative Education Events

3. Other Business

### Acceptance of the minutes of the 4th CCC annual meeting

Christine Zangari moved that the minutes of the 4th annual council meeting be accepted as a true record. This was seconded by Anthony Esposito and carried.

### Council Papers

*The Council Papers are edited and published bi-monthly by the Secretariat of the Cooperative Community Council. The papers are open to submission of art work and articles from members and associates. The Council reserves the right to select content. Contact the Secretary on 3366 7089 or by mail at CCC Secretariat, 21 St Johns Ave, Ashgrove, Brisbane, 4060.*



### New member and associate rules adopted

#### Motion on proposed changes to the rules

It is moved by Peter Pamment, seconded by Anthony Esposito and carried by consensus that the rules be changed as proposed.

The changes read:

#### 6a. Nominal Members

(a) A person, having applied and been nominated for membership of the council, shall be a nominal member for a minimum period of one year and a maximum period of two years. He or she shall cease to be a nominal member at any time during this period if and when he or she qualifies for membership, is ratified as a member by a decision of the council and is thereby awarded membership rights.

(b) Nominal members shall participate in meetings of the council but shall not be entitled to exercise the decision making rights of members.

(c) A nominal member who does not qualify for membership in the allotted time, or by his or her own choosing, may instead become an associate of the council.

#### 6b. Associates Of The Council

(a) An associate of the council shall be a person or a body corporate who does not qualify to be, or to continue to be, a member of the council, but who supports the objects

of the council and wishes to maintain a relationship to the council.

(b) An associate shall pay an annual supporters fee, the amount to be determined by the council from time to time, and shall receive communications on a regular basis.

(c) Associates of the council may be:

(i) an individual

(ii) a body corporate

(iii) a member who has ceased to be an active member according to the provisions of Article 8 Active Membership.

(d) Associates may participate in meetings of the council but shall not be entitled to exercise the decision making rights of members.

(e) An associate that is a body corporate may participate in meetings of the council through one recognised participant and any number of observers.

#### 8. Active Membership

(d) A member may, with the knowledge of the council, cease to be active for a specified period of time. He or she may resume participation with full membership rights, provided that he or she has maintained an association with the council, according to Article 6b Associates Of The Council, during the period in which he or she has been inactive.

# Crafting an independent association

## Secretariat Statement

by Anthony Esposito

### The Focus Of Action in '94/'95

The core of the agenda for this year has focused on the following:

#### Objects and membership

This has involved a review of Cooperative Community Council objects and reform of the membership and associate structure. We have affirmed all of our stated objectives. The proposed membership and associate structure are set to deliver a responsive and pro-active organisation.

#### Democratic forum

This has been the basis of all our development to date. We have maintained bi-monthly council meetings, making democratic consensus decisions, for five years now. The scope in this for discussion of broad politics has been taken up in tandem with our focus on regional development. The Council Papers have enlarged to provide a 'communications forum' of a sustained quality.

#### Cooperatives Legislation

Consistent focus on this front has yielded breakthroughs and opportunity this year. We have a well researched perspective and preferred reform options. We have raised our profile through 'action research' whereby we could hold some legitimate status in developments towards new Queensland legislation.

#### International Cooperative Alliance

Through our correspondent, Kerry, we are getting benefits from tapping the intellectual resources of the ICA and enriching ourselves through participation, albeit of a limited nature, in the broad cooperative movement.

#### Cooperative education

Our educational work has not lapsed. The annual cooperative education events have now reached ten years. We supported the Making Our Mark project and the Community Works journal proposal.

#### Cooperative community networking and communication

For the first time since the early days of the council we have put effort towards outreach to the regional cooperatives, the Cooperative Federation of Queensland, the general public and government, and now the ICA. We have used the Secretariat as a basis for communications and a locus in the cooperative network and the CCC Papers as a communications tool. The education events have also continued to serve these functions.

#### Developing a funding and project base

Through two initiatives we have sought to advance a funding and project base for the council. One is the review of the objects, which gave as an opportunity to conceptualise projects that do or could meet those objectives along with a framework of assessment. The other is the dialogue on a proposed Cooperative Community Council and Cooperative Education Strategy Group partnership agreement, utilising the incorporation status of Community Works as a financial and project auspicing arm for the council.

#### Strategic issues in the regional community

This is a new item, commenced with the '95 education event, to be carried through to the new year. It affirms the council intention of developing as a regional agency.

This work gives good coverage of our objects and shows a strengthening of our organisational development. This and past year's work on constitutional development and consolidation has enabled a succinct definition of the council and its objects. A brochure has been produced to presents this. It states five main points in a statement of aims, that is;

- education provision
- inter-cooperative networking and communication
- regional development
- cooperative political advancement
- legislative application and change

No doubt, as these are broad statements of direction, they are subject to elaboration and change.

Combined with the objects, though, they are a clear statement of purpose.

#### Some Comments

I would like to add some comments in anticipation of another year.

- The last year signals that the CCC has broken through on a number of fronts in terms of both process and substantial issues.
- We have brought about logical consistency to our organisation and structure, and settled the foundation of an independent, cooperative and innovative association.
- The careful and consistent work we have done over five years has brought us to a point where we can freely choose our pace of development and build a platform for cooperative advancement.
- We have achieved a calibration of 'means and ends' that is, I think, a model political accomplishment. The Council illustrates, through its presence and its actions, the politics of cooperation.
- Our standing forum, which can continue to strike political and philosophic chords, will play a valuable part in giving the cooperative project in our region broad, contemporary relevance.
- In the year ahead we can strengthen our agenda: all the work we are currently

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The column

## A focus on direction

### Strategic issues in the regional community

Anthony introduced this item. He pointed out that the '95 Education Long Weekend session was intended as a start to a debate on strategic issues in the regional community. He said the session was used to raise issues and stimulate strategic thinking. There was a joint presentation at the weekend with Kerry covering international cooperation and the ICA, Merv talking around a national and political focus and Anthony promoting a regional focus on movement goals. A range of responses was generated by participants using the lateral thinking 'six hats method'. All of this material will be included in the Session Papers from the weekend.

Anthony tables part of his presentation as a discussion paper. The paper is "2020 - The cooperative ascendancy" and is written as a future memory. Its focus suggests that we can be bigger and more proactive if we choose. It is a question of how far we want to go as a movement? Over what time?

There is discussion about distribution of the 2020 future memory paper. Merv notes there are risks involved in promoting ideas like those contained in the paper. Allan thinks these risks are not insurmountable and there are benefits in putting ideas up. Anthony says that his feeling, after reflection, was to table the paper. He feels that to achieve strategic goals we must engage in public debate.

It is understood that the council is a pro-active body in this way; that it already engages with the international movement, with individual cooperatives and the Cooperative Federation of Queensland.

Anthony says that he attended the Cooperative Federation of Queensland annual conference and general meeting. For the first time he has heard the federation talking of effecting political outcomes through electoral means. They are starting to encourage smaller co-ops to be involved and have a voice. Peter thinks that the smaller co-ops need to get involved.

Allan suggests separate focal points related to each level so that those who want to be involved can be. Merv forwards Peter's suggestion from the Education Weekend to put up a page on the Internet as a focal point on ideas and practice of cooperation. Allan asks if it could be an open process as to what goes into it and in accessing results. Peter suggests he and Merv could develop the idea as a council project. There is agreement that Peter and Merv develop a proposal on an Internet "page" as a council project. This is moved by Peter Pamment, seconded by Merv Partridge and carried by consensus.

## Crafting an independent association

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doing should continue. Therefore I recommend we should maintain our direction while reviewing and broadening our educational objectives, systematically building our associative structure and opening a full scale debate on regional and strategic issues that draws upon a wide view of cooperation.

And finally, we can commence a new cycle confident in the substance of our agenda and our capacity to build cooperative programmes.

## Group Discussion

The group gives appreciation for Anthony's report and there is particular notice of the brochure and its significance. Allan Halladay moves that the report be accepted. It is seconded by Ann Jupp and carried by consensus.

Merv reflects upon the effect of past peak body issues on interest and participation in the council, particularly for Maleny participants.

Anthony says that he felt the problems were caused by an ill-timed initiative, but that the issues have been thoroughly resolved.

Ann expresses that she needs opportunity for reflection and philosophy and that this is part of her ongoing interest in the council.

Peter is in agreement with Ann. There is general agreement that clarity has emerged through persevering with the council process and that these discussions are important in opening out ideas.

Peter informs the group that 'federation' is on the agenda of the Maleny co-ops. He will feed back into the CCC on the progress of this. He says the purpose of this federation is to meet practical needs of local participating bodies.

## New CCC Maleny contact

### Appointment of a co-secretary

Paul advises the meeting that his term of two years as co-secretary is up and he is not renominating. He says he hasn't taken up a great deal in this role. He sees the Co-op Education Weekends as his major contribution. He asks if there are any nominees.

Anthony says he approached both Jill and Allan about filling the position. Both expressed an understanding about being approached, but are too busy and so declined. Anthony says he considers that there could be grounds for a 'Maleny nominee' to provide a local contact.

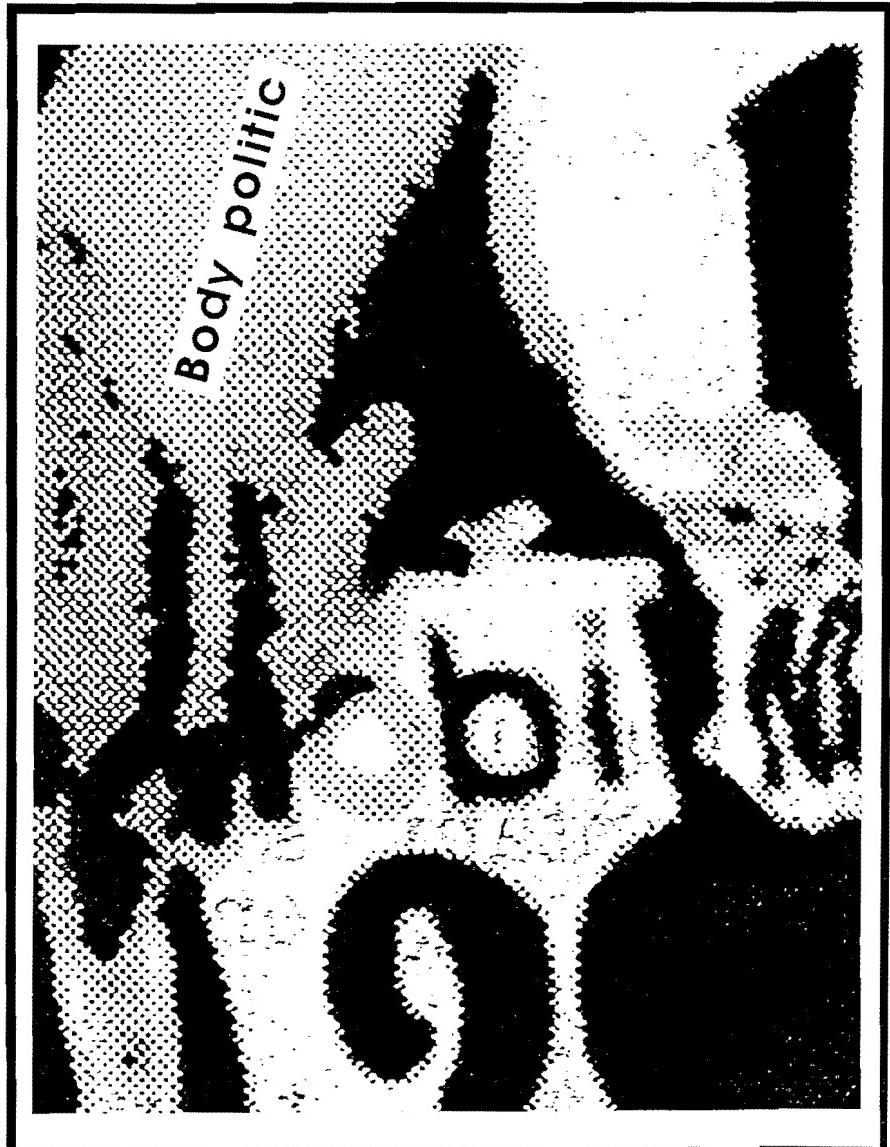
The meeting discussed the profile of the 'regional face' of the CCC. It was felt that it could be good to have Council contacts in both Brisbane and Maleny. This is put to Ann and Peter to consider.

Anthony mentions that the work load is not a great deal. Ann says that she has major commitments already. If she took on a secretary position she would like to fulfil a real purpose. Merv suggests being a 'regional contact' as a role that Ann could take on. Ann says she is comfortable with this.

It is agreed then that Ann Jupp be the regional contact in Maleny for the CCC. This is moved by Christine Zangari, seconded by Anthony Esposito and carried by consensus.

Anthony suggests it may not be necessary to maintain two secretaries on practical grounds. In retrospect, a 'cooperative secretariat' is there primarily as a philosophic commitment. The group agree to review the structure of the secretariat at the next meeting.

Allan moves acknowledgment and appreciation of Pauls' contribution. There is general assent.



## Cooperative relationship assured

### CCC & CESG cooperative agreement

A proposal has been discussed in a number of proceeding meetings. It is a proposal which recognises the overlap in the agenda and memberships of the council and the Cooperative Education Strategy Group, soon to incorporate as Community Works.

Allan asked if the essence of the agreement is that there be a 'cooperative relationship'. This proves to be a shared understanding. Anthony offers to examine areas of cross-over between Community Works and the CCC in preparation of the Community Works articles of association, which could form the basis of a cooperative agreement.

It is affirmed that there be a cooperative relationship between the Cooperative Community Council and Community Works and that Anthony will draft some terms of agreement alongside his work on the Community Works articles. This is moved by Paul Monsour, seconded by Ann Jupp and carried by consensus.

## Miscellaneous notes

### Other Business

Allan announced that he will be retiring as a lecturer of Social Policy and Social Work with the University of Queensland at the end of the year. He and Nadine plan to spend a year in Canada. Allan said that he wants to maintain his connection to the group.

Anthony said that the secretariat has received responses to its inquiries on cooperatives legislation and he will prepare a report to be published in the Council Papers.

Merv has been speaking to the organisers of the food co-op at the Queensland University. He said it is not shaping up as an autonomous cooperative but auspiced by the Student Union. He asked if there are ways to support them.

## 10 years marks review of CCC education events

### Reviewing the CCC Cooperative Education Weekends

Paul introduces this topic. He says that we agreed to look at the future of the Cooperative Education Events after the May Long Weekend, which represented the ten year mark. Paul recounts some of the difficulties he encountered in organising the last event. He sees a need to separate the concepts of education and training.

Anthony says he thinks we could look at the event by breaking it down into the functions it performs and whether the weekends fulfil these adequately. This could lead to more events dealing with separate facets.

Identifying these functions yields a potential calendar of cooperative education events, he says, including social retreats and gatherings, conferences for education and cooperative philosophy, and specialised training in core cooperative competencies. Ann says the Weekends are important for social functions. She thinks having three strands as we did this year is too much. She doesn't want to see too many events. Paul sees a need to set up a training facility and to have weekends that are entirely a social event.

Christine suggests that we could develop a review questionnaire to be sent to people on the Education Events mailing list. This could seek options on format, topics, costs, participants, et cetera.

She said she is interested in producing the draft questionnaire. Allan, Anthony, Ann, Merv, Paul all offer to view the draft and give feedback.

We agree to get a booking on both the Bribie and Landsborough venues to ensure we have one for next time. Paul said he will do this.

## No change to active member criteria

### 95/96 active membership criteria

It is agreed to continue with the 94/95 year's active membership criteria for the 95/96 year. This is moved by Ann Jupp, seconded by Christine Zangari and carried by consensus.

It is agreed to approach the cooperatives previously sent Council Papers, inviting them to be "associates" of the CCC and to keep ten cooperative organisations on the free mailing list for promotional purposes.

This is moved by Allan Halladay, seconded by Anthony Esposito and carried by consensus.

## Notice

### 31st CCC meeting

August 5th, 1995

1:00pm at the Maleny Credit Union Maple St, Maleny

Lunch at 12 pm at the Upfront Cooperative Club, Maple St.

### PROPOSED AGENDA

1. Acceptance of minutes of the 30th CCC meeting
2. Business arising including -
  - i. Strategic issues in the regional community
  - ii. CCC & CESG cooperative agreement
  - iii. Review of CCC Cooperative Education Events
  - iv. Review of secretariat structure
3. Other Business



Gain

## Reviewing cooperatives law

### Answers to questions on cooperatives legislation

The series of questions drafted by the Cooperative Community Council and sent to Commonwealth Senator Dee Margetts have been raised in the Senate. Senator Bolkus, the Minister representing the Attorney-General, circulated answers to these questions.

Senator Margetts asked the Minister if the Corporations Law requirement "that prohibits more than 20 new shareholders in a company in a single year without issuing a prospectus is ... intended to apply to cooperatives". She also asked if there are "different interpretations of this change to the Corporations Law between States, depending on individual cooperatives legislation" and if "it is possible for Registrars of cooperatives to effect general adaptations and modifications with respect to this issue".

Senator Bolkus has replied, in full, that: "The Corporations Law provides that where not more than 20 offers or invitations in relation to securities, or issues of securities, are made personally to a person within the preceding twelve months, a person is not required to comply with the prospectus requirements of the Law. This exclusion has been in the Corporations Law from the date of its commencement on 1 January 1991.

"The intrastate fundraising activities of cooperatives are not subject to the requirements of the Corporations Law and are regulated under the relevant State or Territory legislation. The prospectus requirements of the Corporations Law do apply to any interstate fundraising activities of cooperatives. However the 20/12 exclusion will apply.

"The Corporations Law is administered at a National level by the Australian Securities Commission. Interpretation of the Corporations Law does not depend on individual State and territory cooperatives legislation. In so far as the Corporations Law applies to interstate fundraising activities of cooperatives, exemptions or modifications of the prospectus requirements may be given effect at an administrative level only by the Australian Securities Commission. State and Territory Registrars of cooperatives do not have powers to effect general adaptations or modifications to the prospectus requirements where applicable."

An inquiry by the Cooperative Community Council to the Registrar of Primary Producers Cooperatives in Queensland, Mr Pat Taylor, has confirmed that the intrastate fundraising activities of cooperatives are not subject to the Corporations Law. Mr Taylor says that the separate jurisdiction of cooperatives was established some years ago in a Supreme Court case involving Darling Downs Bacon Cooperative.

Information also provided by Mr Taylor on the progress towards reform and uniformity of cooperatives legislation has in part been confirmed by Senator Bolkus. In response to Senator Margetts' questions Senator Bolkus states that "the Government recognises that the present lack of uniform legislation is an impediment to the growth of the cooperative sector, particularly in agriculture", although he says "that the review and reform of the legal framework of cooperatives is not the responsibility of the Commonwealth, since cooperatives are primarily governed by State and Territory legislation".

Senator Bolkus confirmed that reform issues are "currently on the agenda of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General" and that the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General Working Party on Consistent Cooperatives Legislation "is progressing the matter". "The working party was formed after concerns expressed by the Australian Agricultural Council that the lack of consistent legislation between the States was a major barrier to the growth of the cooperative sector in agriculture and a barrier to greater export effort by agricultural cooperatives", he said.

Senator Bolkus also said that the working party has produced a draft model Bill aimed "to create an Interstate Division for inclusion in the relevant State and territory legislation, setting out the minimum



## Reviewing cooperatives law

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requirements needed to enable interstate cooperative operation, consistent with appropriate prudential standards". There are some matters outstanding concerning the interface between the Interstate Division in the model Bill and the Corporations Law.

The Cooperative Community Council has previously reported on the range of legislative reform options being considered by the working party. The CCC secretariat recently wrote to the Queensland Attorney-General, Dean Wells, stating that matters of reform are of

considerable interest to the council which has "for some time been discussing issues of legislative change and undertaken research on the matter, particularly as it effects the start-up and continued operation of community-based and enterprise cooperatives".

The secretariat requested details on the progress of reform issues within the Queensland Attorney-General's department and notice of any consultative or deliberative forums operating or to be set up to advance this. It requested "access, where appropriate, to processes for reform of the legislative

framework for cooperatives in Queensland".

The secretariat also expressed the council's consideration that while an interstate division is seen as a positive step for cooperatives where interstate and export trade is a main concern, "it would not address the need for reform more widely".

Adoption of the interstate division into Queensland cooperatives legislation as an interim measure may stall the process of reform and the council is concerned that a new Act will not be forthcoming, it was stated.

Mr Wells was informed that "the council's position is one in favour of reform of the whole legislative framework coupled with national consistency". The Attorney-General has not yet replied.

Meanwhile, changes to the administrative arrangements for cooperatives in Queensland continue. The Queensland Treasury has brought cooperatives that are financial intermediaries under the scope of a new Financial Intermediaries (Institutions) Bill 1995. A circular from the Office of the Registrar of Cooperatives states that "cooperative societies will not be included under the new legislation, which will not therefore effect them other than one society which is regarded as operating as a financial institution. Instead, fundraising by cooperative societies whether by way of shares, deposits, loans, members loan funds, other debentures or prescribed interests will be subject to enforcement of the prospectus provisions of the Corporations Law as applied by section 59 of the Cooperative and Other Societies Act".

Cooperative societies registered under this Act are now administered in the Office of Consumer Affairs.

Senator Margetts has questioned Senator Bolkus on reports that the financial and capital raising powers of cooperatives are being eroded forcing people to use non-cooperative financial institutions.

She has asked whether he had any knowledge of the removal of deposit and loan powers of cooperatives or of instances where cooperatives have failed through the use of deposit and loan powers.

Senator Bolkus said he was "not in a position to answer questions concerning the policies of state governments" and that failures, if any, were not a matter within his sphere of ministerial responsibility.

# 2020

## The cooperative ascendancy

### a "future memory"

by Anthony Esposito

If a day is a long time in politics, then twenty five years is enough time to change the world. At least our part of it. It is pleasing to be able to recount to this Conference, the 25th since the start of our regional development agenda, the story of our achievement.

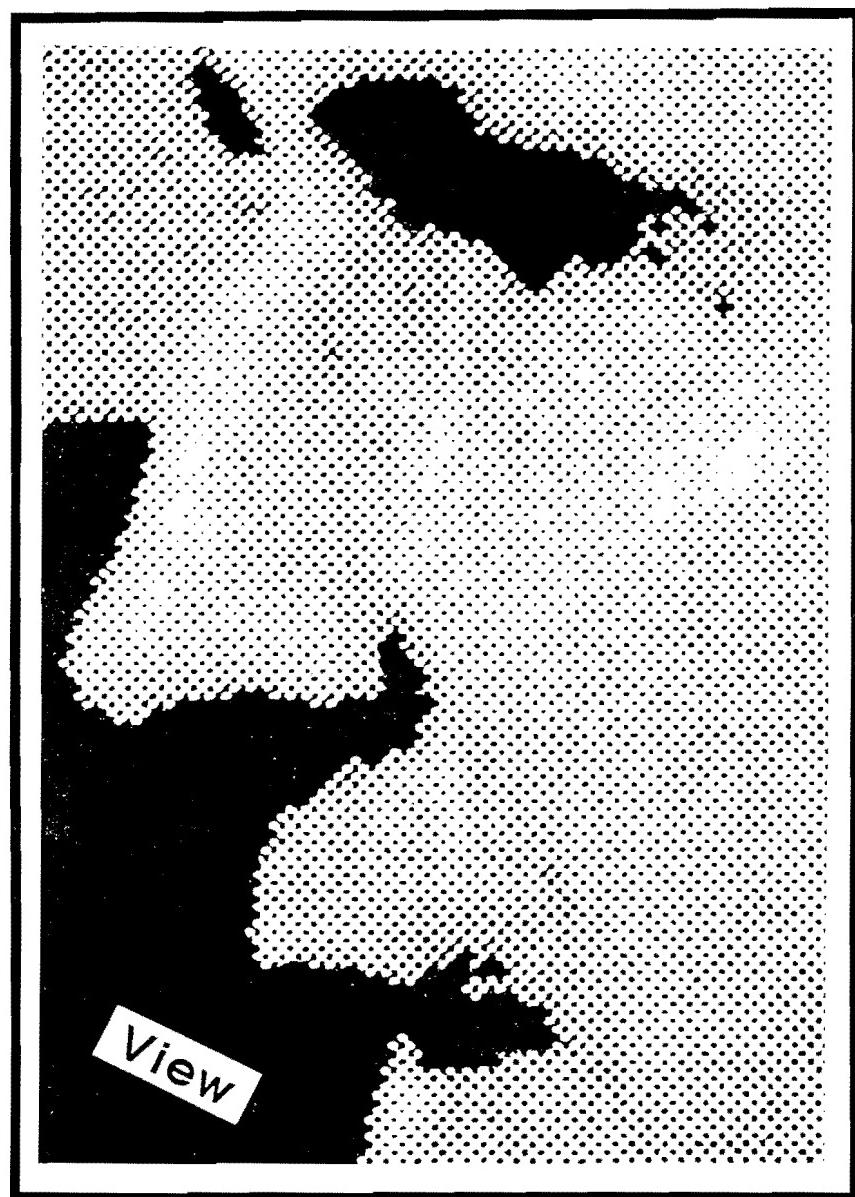
In 1997, and there were many of us who said "not before time", new cooperative legislation was introduced in Queensland. In many ways, though, this proved to be just the right time. Coming as it did with the move to consistent legislation across Australia, a national climate for cooperative interest was created.

The amalgamation of the two core cooperative divisions, Primary Producers and Cooperative and Other Societies, did much to bring the resources and traditional standing enjoyed by the former together with the energy, ideas and contemporary relevance of much of the latter; a result unlikely in earlier times.

Our intuition that removing the major impediment contained in the old Act, the minimum number for start-ups, would encourage more cooperatives to be formed proved to be correct. The new co-op legislation created opportunity for employee ownership and cooperative enterprise.

Although it took longer than most expected, and another determined decade of work to realise the benefits of the new provision, by 2010 we were witnessing the rapid growth in new cooperative enterprise formation.

External powers also came to play an important part in the renaissance of the cooperative movement in Australia. Global economic and political forces worked to shape values that were ultimately, if rather ironically and unintentionally, reflected in a recognition and selection of 'the cooperative option', as it was to be referred to in the public debates of the day.



The new economic order, organised as it was on specialisation, cooperation, interdependence and an entrepreneurial, self-managed approach to production proved decisive. Long experience in democratic cooperation and leadership, and successful market economics, gave cooperatives a leading edge as organisations were transformed from within - cooperative organisations no less than others.

The emphasis on the public idea of the 'individual in community', as opposed to the old, dichotomous antagonism between the 'collective' and the 'rugged individual', favoured cooperatives. When British Labour, with its roots deeply embedded in the modern cooperative movement, was returned in its famous landslide victory, after overturning its entrenched Clause 4

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## 2020 The cooperative ascendancy

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'socialist' objective, we saw a sign that a new cooperative movement was advancing.

Closer to home, the spirit that carried the referendum to establish the Australian Republic in 2000 proved to be a cooperative one. No one at the time fully understood the great social and cultural changes that would flow from this single and in many ways self-evident act. In fact, internal debates within the cooperative movement were often highly critical of the lack of leadership and participation shown on this front.

We learnt an important lesson from this; that cooperative values and principles are not the sole province of the cooperative movement. This lesson enabled us to grow to maturity in the Australian community and to take a more prominent place.

The oft cited notion of the day, that Keating was the new Menzies, was not far from the mark. Both had held the power of the middle ground and both had artfully balanced moderate and radical forces to create a progressive movement relevant to the consensus of the broad majority. In electoral politics this proved decisive.

The rapprochement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians that was achieved with the coming of the republic showed that fundamentally, Australians could transcend factional and selfish interest when the causes of justice demanded.

The successful republican referendum was a pinnacle in Keating's political campaign and he retired at the end of the term in which it was achieved. In 2002, for the first time, a major national political

party in Australia promoted a woman to the position of leader, who went on to head the Government for another two terms.

No one anticipated such a long term government, that alone a Labor government. By the time its momentum waned and it was finally replaced in 2008 the coalition of traditional conservative forces in Australian politics had been decimated. Again this proved decisive for us. The disintegration of the conservative coalition, a process that, as we can now trace it, went back as far as their shock election defeat in 1993, opened the way for a realignment of Australian politics, and a coalition of new and progressive political forces emerged.

The Democratic Republic Alliance came to power as a national force relatively quickly and its first term in government surprised many with its competence, its positivity and its enterprise. It sustained the long run economic prosperity resulting from our enmeshing with the Asia Pacific region, and appealed successfully to the community's cooperative values in limiting returns to capital holders, taxing excess private earnings and creating the universal guaranteed income threshold. 'Cooperation' was a part of the Alliance platform.

During this period of New Politics, Queensland demonstrated many region-specific characteristics, as it had done so often before. In 1999, despite the general malaise in national conservative politics, the Queensland Nationals staged a remarkable come-back and were returned to Government on Green Party preferences.

Few were surprised by this result, but many were surprised that the National's policies and characteristic autocracy had not changed since the days of Fitzgerald.

The legal and institutional reforms put in place by the previous government limited the effects to administrative instability, and successive scandals and ministerial incompetence ensured this was a short lived government.

Labor was returned as a minority Government with the first Alliance members in Australia holding the balance of power.

In the overall climate our cooperatives began to thrive. By 2002 our cooperative education strategy was starting to bite. With the new generation of cooperatively educated young adults and the newly conscious membership of existing co-ops, a rapid increase in cooperative formation was evident. In 2015 over 20% of the regional population were members of cooperatives. By this stage we had achieved critical mass and our influence was assured.

Our generation of cooperators has seen community co-ops build a strong economic and institutional base. Our broad success can be attributed to the "Charter Of Community Organisations" we developed, which opened the movement to more of the population and enabled us to retain our identity. The Charter broadened the appeal of community co-ops, shifting the focus away from perceived alternative lifestyle options to a diverse array of self-styled community options. It is worth taking this opportunity to restate the principles on which our charter is based:

- The principles of democratic organisation
- The principles of consensus
- The principles of cooperation
- The principles of ethical responsibility
- The principles of ecology
- The principles of equality

They seem self-evident now, but few will forget the political heat in which they were tempered. The division experienced at the Conference of 2004 is a reminder of how hard won our success has been.

It is paradoxical that the consensus principle won through in the end, but not until it had been stripped of all its idealism and subjected to the rigours of practical democracy.

We take heart though when we see that now there are over 2000 cooperatives registered in our region alone, accounting directly for some 15% of economic activity. The result of our successful 'community capital' campaign was to drive the expansion of enterprise cooperatives.

Credit unions become a major self-conscious force in cooperatives. They gained wide-spread support as public opinion turned against the private banking sector, and they were instrumental in establishing the New Australia Democratic Bank, the first truly cooperative investment bank, head-quartered here in our region.

When the idea of childcare cooperatives became an industry standard, the reconciliation between the cooperative and labour movements was well under way. This was clearly a result of the so called 'feminisation' of politics that was occurring as women progressed in their campaign to achieve equality.

That women as a general rule now hold half the positions across the board, in politics, government, business and cooperatives, is in some small part owing to the International Cooperative Alliance's gender integration program which was adopted by cooperatives around the country.

When the Federation of Natural Health Cooperatives achieved its breakthrough in the public acceptance of traditional and alternative medicines, the standing of cooperatives rose. The services provided through cooperative health centres has now reached 30% of total health services.

The vitality and enterprise of our region's arts cooperatives, some of the few cooperative organisations to play an active part in the republican movement, have enhanced our cultural life and brought creativity to many of our educational and community development processes. Their capacity to generate self-employment options for artists has impressed many in the arts community.

The new wave of intermediate scale primary producers co-ops with their specialised value added production, linked on the one hand to domestic and export marketing federations and on the other with community development objectives and community service cooperatives, revitalised many regional centres and promoted a dispersion of the population. This helped to cap the SEQ region's population growth at 2.5 million.

We saw the SEQ region transformed into an international cultural destination, a high-tech capital, and a model in the transformation of urban settings to achieve a sound environmental base with sustainable development outcomes. Our environment protection laws have made this the highest rated urban enviro-culture in Australia.

As we know, this rather creative period, from 1995 to 2010, gave Australia its first regional council government. The Cooperative Community Council's early vision to build a cooperative political platform was rewarded when one of our members was elected to the new legislature under the Alliance banner.

The Alliance system for selecting and endorsing independent candidates within a broad ranging and cooperative accord has proven to be a valuable one time and time again.

It is our long standing commitment to education that deserves final mention. This once neglected principle has been the cornerstone on which the cooperative ascendancy has been built.

Our efforts in founding the ICA regional development office and our cooperative education and entertainment multimedia centre, using cable, tele-centres and computers, radio, and cultural organizations were instrumental in this outcome.

Our record in education is exemplary and is confirmed in the fact that the Centre For The Study Of Cooperatives has completed the final stage of the new institute.

This will further widen the scope for our technical training curriculum and prestige courses in art and culture, law, economics, politics, government, international relations, social justice, peace and ecology.

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